

**Success story-creating songs about history!**  
**-Sabaton, branding and storytelling in Heavy Metal music.**



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# ABSTRACT

Thesis

<p><b>Title</b> Success story-creating songs about history! -Sabaton, branding and storytelling in Heavy Metal music</p>	<p><b>Number of pages</b> <b>80</b></p>
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<p><b>Degree programme</b> Arts Management</p>	
<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>The objective of this thesis is to portray and analyze how storytelling is used by the band as a tool of building its concept and identity. This is qualitative empirical case study aiming to discover multiple uses of storytelling by music artist. Who is responsible for building the brand? Artist, the content presented or interpretation of audience? - thesis touches upon a dialogue between brand identity and brand image. How brand identity and brand image evolves as a dialogue between the artist and audience? While looking at the creative process and stories presented by the artist more questions arise therefore study explores also what is the role of audience -in this case fans of heavy metal band? Another issue raised is to explore the dialogue between an audience and the artist, how storytelling influence stylistic content of the song and does the subject unity stimulate fans involvement in creating the stories.</p> <p>Storytelling is a tool to create artist identity and through presented stories clearly highlight the concept and brand.</p> <p>Storytelling is one of the most important elements in development of human culture and communication. Nowadays it is present in almost all areas of business. Storytelling is crucial in "identity making" for a product or a brand.</p> <p>Study starts with theoretical framework and referring to existing research on storytelling with greater attention paid to branding and the storytelling used in historiography. Exploring the base for a good story as a part of theoretical framework lead to most recent phenomena of storytelling used in branding and identity making.</p>	

Following part of the thesis are research methodology and description of selected case.

One band was selected as a case study, whereas one of the band members was interviewed and 20 fans. Band member was asked 16 questions. Initially fans were asked 10 questions and if they fit special profile there has been a follow up of additional 6-10 questions. Interviews started in October 2013 and last one was conducted in February 2014.

Analysis and results chapter starts from demonstrating the outcome of interviewing the band member followed by 6 subheadings opening up more main themes that arise from fans interviews.

Study accredits several references to the music business. Chosen case study implement still unique concept- which is that -through all artist's albums they are keeping the historical battles portrayal as a main subject of the songs. Another issues referring to the functioning of music business raised in the thesis were relationship with the fans the touring habits. Fans of the concept and focus of the artist –portraying history -are creating unique culture often their other of their interest cross over with history.

Big section is focused on fans involvement with chosen case study and therefore concretion of the concept – dialogue between audience and the artist. Their involvement in Sabaton's creativity provide some support for the conclusion that fans are involved shaping identity of the artist.

Another theme strongly arising in the conclusions were the marketing strategies in the music business and unique selling points of the artist.

Lyrics of Sabaton's song are quoted before the chapters begin in order to give a reader a flavor of artist's storytelling.

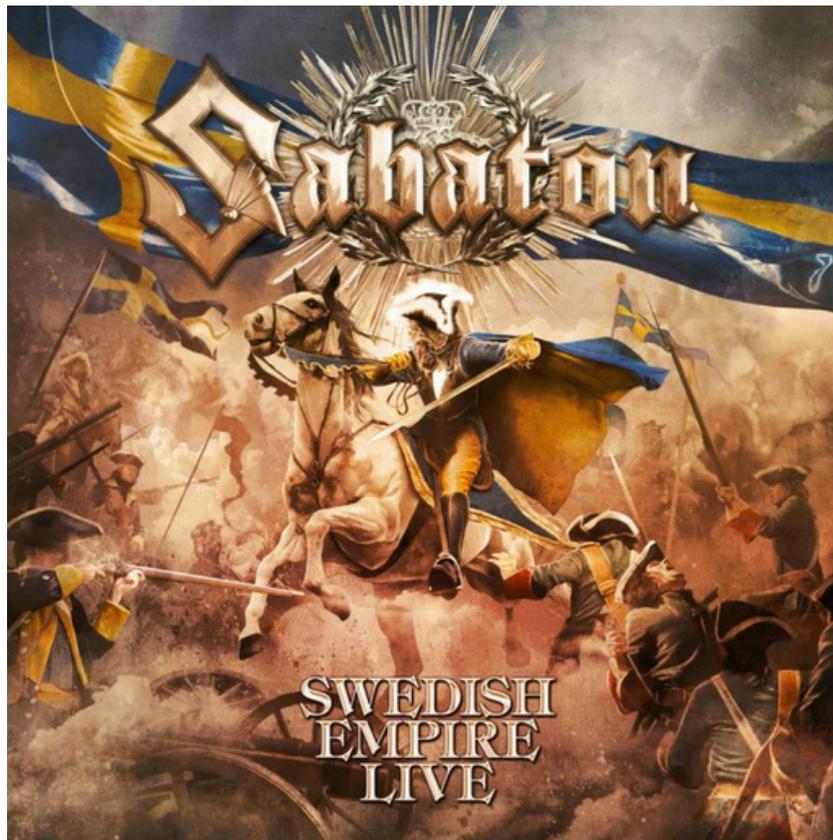
**Keywords**

Storytelling, image building, branding, audience artist relations, music business, genre, concept band

**Additional information**

## ***1. Introduction***

*"So silent before the storm  
Awaiting command  
A few has been chosen to stand  
As one outnumbered by far  
The orders from high command  
Fight back, hold your ground!  
Always remember, fathers and sons at war  
Always remember, a fallen soldier  
Always remember, buried in history"  
(Sabaton, 40:1)*



(Figure 1: Sabaton's album cover 2013)

## ***1.1 Background of the study***

*"The best stories engage all of senses. The more senses that are stimulated, the more people will not only relate to your story, but be moved by it. The ultimate achievement is that people recall your message as an idea of their own, rather something they heard. But in order to trigger this type of reaction, you can't simply focus on visually presenting the facts, figures and product features; you have to create a deeper connection. "* (Wentz, 2013: 2)

In Popular Music we are able to find many stories. These can be elements of autobiographies, love stories or expression of frustrations. Some of those stories are presented in the company of music, poeticized- and those could have been inspired by existing pieces of literature, folk tales or history. Through the notation, music can enrich the worlds, add more emotion, and illustrate the message.

Lyrics and music can create beautiful unity, illustrating some story for the listener, expressing it. Good example of such a unity even more illustrated is by outfits, dance and acting to present full story is opera. Story illustration can happen also in Popular Music presenting a “opera like” experience by evoking our imagination.

From the moment when I become fluent in languages the lyrical content of the songs become important for me. Partly, because the melody and lyrics of heard piece of music often becomes my "earworm". The phenomenon has been refereed by variety of researchers and concern the piece of music that continually repeats through a person’s mind after is no longer playing. (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013)

Researchers found out that 98% individuals experience earworms. According to Kellaris song with lyrics become 73% of all earworms whereas instrumental music cause only 7,7%. (Kellaris 2001: 66) For the reason that I personally experience earworms quite often- the depth of the lyrics is important for me- to allow me memorize wise or educational or poetic lyrics along with a good musical line.

Connecting music with content was also a good learning method for me. I become interested in lyrical content and tried to find the bands with interesting combinations of lyrics and music, unique topic or concept.

In the music industry- music is classified by its genres. There are different categories classifying music into genres. It is also the point of reference while preparing particular promotion and fitting the artist for the particular market. Different genres touches upon different subjects but in the most cases the sound of the instruments, guitar riffs, tempo and melody is what makes it belong into particular genre.

Record labels, recording studios and specialist working for them might specialize in recording, producing and promoting particular type of music. Through genres people are identifying themselves with particular subcultures that are expressing particular mindset or values. Therefore, genre also identify the audience and its culture or belonging to the ideology subculture. Scholars refer to the subcultures as groups of people circulating around same venues, choosing similar shops, media or movies. (Borthwick and Moy 2004) This observation help profiling groups of people and choosing suitable merchandise. Each genre through the lyrics and music describes different kinds of stories. Sometimes as in case of this thesis case study the storytelling and subject presented builds the identity or brand of a band.

"A purely musicological approach will tell us a great deal about the 'inner meaning' of particular pieces of popular music, but due to the 'textualism' of this approach, traditional musicology cannot tell us as much about the relationship between musical text and the culture and societies in which they are situated. "(Borthwick and Moy 2004: 4)

There are few existing studies describing either music used in storytelling or storytelling using music although not focused on musical storytelling-artist being a concept of transmitting knowledge about particular subject and evoking people's interest in that area.

## ***1.2 Aim of the study***

This research was designed to portray and analyze how storytelling is used by the band as a tool of building its concept and identity. This is qualitative empirical case study aiming to discover multiple uses of storytelling by music artist. Who is responsible for building the brand?

Artist, the content presented or interpretation of audience? Those sub-questions are leading to answer- How brand identity and brand image evolves as a dialogue between the artist and audience?

Thesis touches upon a dialogue between brand identity and brand image.

While looking at the creative process and the stories presented by the artist more sub- questions arise therefore study explores also what is the role of audience -in this case fans of heavy metal band?

Storytelling is crucial tool in "identity making" for a product or a brand.

### *1.3 Structure of the thesis*

Followed by first chapter containing the introduction that presented background and aim of the study this thesis is opened by second chapter presenting theoretical framework of the thesis.

Second chapter presents consecutively definitions of the storytelling, brand identity vs brand image, storytelling used in historiography followed by elements of a good story and storytelling used in branding.

Third chapter explains methodological approach of the study-qualitative case study research, presents research methods, form of collection of the data and its analysis as also selected case for the research.

Fourth chapter is focused on analysis and results. This chapter presents results of two varied interviews- first one conducted with a member of Sabaton, second one with fans of the bands.

This chapter is organized by the main themes that appeared in the interviews and its analysis.

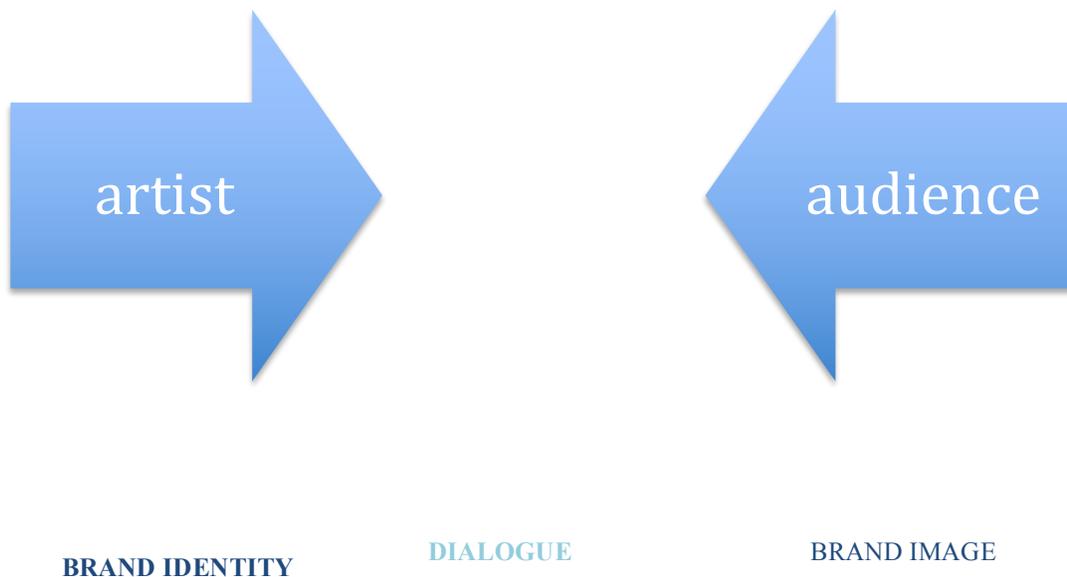
Fifth chapter present the conclusion of the research. Thesis is closed by discussing the possibility of further studies. Last part contains references and bibliography, appendixes including samples of interviews used in the thesis.

## ***2. Theoretical Framework***

This chapter presents the theory included in research- branding and storytelling.

### ***2.1 Brand image vs brand identity?***

Nowadays our world is surrounded by multiple choices of the way we live; define ourselves, all linked to products-therefore brands we choose. The brand name, logo is what people recognize and brand itself is what people identify themselves with - if its ideology, quality or style behind it. Brands also touch upon cultural industries defining music, films, books, theatre plays which people choose. Cultural industries- such as Disney, in music Sony or heavy metal record label Nuclear Blast are defining quality and certain style of the product. Hesmondalagh claims that within those, every star, every film or every book is kind of own brand. There is a difference between referred earlier genre and a brand, whereas genre is much broader way of labeling the product based on its similarity while brand stand for the quality and the satisfaction and reward people might attain by experiencing the product. (Hesmondhalgh 2013:9)



***(Figure 2: Brand image vs brand identity)***

This thesis focuses on storytelling building a concept and identity and arising from the dialogue between an artist and audience. Storytelling is a tool to create artist identity and through presented stories clearly highlight the concept.

Brand identity refers to how the band creates their image, presents themselves in the media and the message they spread to their audience and the public.

Brand identity presents reality about the artist but also it is active, can be changed and looks into the future includes the plans and the vision of the artist themselves, reflects the vision where the band want to be.

Brand image reflects the view of the audience (customers) how they see the brand (artist), their opinions, their expectation towards the artist and decoded message they receive from the artist.

## ***2.2 Defining Storytelling***

Storytelling gazes at history, bringing lines of the past into straight line extension into the future. This is how Boje one of leading scholars on storytelling summed up contemporary storytelling. (Boje 2010:19) This statement will be never outdated as we are constantly using knowledge gained from the experience of the past generations left to us in the form of stories.

Through the centuries stories were known for bringing people together and inspiring tribes, cultures and nations. The stories were the transmitter of the message, describing historical events, teaching morals or telling the tales.

By the virtue of oral storytelling we know the stories that build words heritage and own unique cultures. Fog refers to storytelling as a shaper of tribes' identity, giving the values and boundaries. Stories also are the channel to exchange knowledge and experience among the generations. (Fog et al., 2005: 16)

Story is a synonymous of narrative. The simplest definition was given by Polkinghorne, he states that narrative is a way in which we structure information, format how we organize the understanding. (Polkinghorne 1988: 111)

The Cambridge Introduction To Narrative describes the narrative as a synonymous for story. " More technically... a narrative is a representation of (i) a structured time-course of particularized events that (ii)introduced conflict( disruption or disequilibrium into a story world (whether that world is presented as actual fictional, dreamed etc. conveying(iii)what it's like to live through that disruption, that is the qualia (or felt awareness) of real or imagined consciousness undergoing the disruptive experience. (Cambridge Introduction to Narrative (2007: 279)

Narrative, we have heard, is central to our essential cognitive activities (Ricoeur), to historical thinking (White), to psychological analysis and practice (Lacan), to political critique and praxis (Lyotard) ;the movement of language and writing across time is 'essentially narrative'...(1990: xi Nash)"

Narrative express in four dimensions, which are time, structure voice and point of view.

Storytelling has been claimed as a motor of motivation and change starting from the individual-White and Epston(1998) refers to psychology where discovering individual life story is giving him an option to change, to research of Boje (2001), Czerniawska (1998) or Fog (2005) among many more who claim that storytelling is powerful to reconstruct big companies.

Lamarque was referring to use of storytelling and narration in the same scale by historians, biographers, journalist and psychoanalyst as well as by people talking in the pubs, lawyers or sport commentators. He highlights the difference between different types of storytelling, pointing out the recounting and shaping of events as the common point of all narration. (Lamarque, cited in Nash 1990: 131)

## ***2.3 Storytelling in branding***

Storytelling is frequently listed as a management practices tool by scholars such as David Boje (2014). Boje in his latest book published in 2014 refers to storytelling as a new field of marketing. (Boje 2014:134)

When it comes to branding we could call storytelling a skeleton of a brand. Storytelling is most often used to build up and explain the brand, accompanying a product is strengthening the brand.

Boje defines it more largely as "storytelling branding" as brand he organization and its products, mission and values with certain storytelling. (Boje 2014:134) This story is used to write press releases, company profile and even annual reports.

Due to the fact that people understand their world as stories, nowadays there are still a lot of studies created addressing an understanding of the role of storytelling in different fields.

Storytelling is claim to be a powerful branding tool through which companies are looking for unique idea for their product in order to build up its image and characteristic. Strong brands can be applied for all areas of goods- fine artist's name, musician, goods, other products, and groceries. Under the brand usually lies down a good story-grounding name of values.

Story is closely tied into company cooperate brand. Products are the subjects of unfolding story. Stories presenting different kind of brands are strongly existing in media- journalists are looking for a good story, media feed and live off on the good stories, relevant, identification, sensationalism, actuality, conflict, emotional content, people personal stories, intelligent strategy.

Storytelling is used as a basic element of contemporary advertising, story universe surrounding their product and services, unique brand values, commercial and music videos sophisticated and creative as filmmaking marketing, entertaining story.

In advertising and marketing drama is the spark that animates it all creative forms. It presents the proceeds and expresses the product as benefits. Dramatizing brand or product makes them compelling and convincing. (Albrighton 2011)

Stories can be used as a tool in order to adapt to a continually changing environment. In business companies learn to understand how to use the elements of stories and storytelling to promote themselves as well as drive business improvement. (Matthews and Wacker 2007: 32) Storytelling is used inside the company to help employees understand primal rules and priorities and develop themselves. Storytelling is used within the company as a sense making factor- for a reflection, action and change. (Boje 2014:133)

Matthews and Wacker (2007: 35) claims that storytelling has the power to chance the destiny of company, an industry, a nation-ultimately-the world. Numbered researcher mentioned rulers such as Stalin or Hitler as an example of propaganda and using storytelling in a dangerous way but also an example of its power.

The challenge which companies are facing is to build solid values of their brand and its where storytelling fits in. Strong brand supposed to be a combination of facts and emotions. (Fog and Budt and Yakabulu 2005: 18) This way there are more appealing to the costumers. Musical artists are promoted and "sold" by management or record companies as a product. Agents are creating the stories, listing artists' unique selling points.

"As human beings we actively seek stories and experiences in our quest for a meaningful life. Likewise, companies need to communicate based on values, and clearly illustrate how they make a difference. It is theses fundamental aspects of our modern society and marketplace that have created the natural link between branding and storytelling." ( Fog and Budtz and Yakabulu 2005: 21).

Story supposed to present companies as one that have a unique identity. Under the cooperate story all products are included sharing the common values and representing quality.

Hatch and Shultz (2001:30) defined "strategic stars" mainly for the cooperate brands but these can be universal which are vision, culture and image.

Vision refers to the overall image of the brand, culture stands for the values, behaviors and attitudes. Image includes the opinions about the brand- which are the customers, media, the general public,

stakeholders.

Concept of brand identity is rich in storytelling in order to create an identity. Identity of a product or a cooperate brand turned out to be nowadays very important issue for a company and the customers. Storytelling helps to create symbols in general public head's and create straight links between the product, concept and its identity. (Schultz and Hatch 2001:31)

Stories in business are used to build a strong reputation. Good reputation attracts wider circles of people and stands for product quality.

“We navigate our world using symbols and visual expressions that signal our personality and values. And brands are one of the means by which we do this.”(Fog and Budtz and Yakabulu 2005: 20)

Another common use of storytelling within companies is to use stories for building elevator pitches. Elevator pitch is very common during an image building as also during networking. Elevator pitch clearly but shortly summed up on who you are what you do and other information depending on situation.

"Stories circulating in and around the companies paint a picture of the company's culture and values, heroes and enemies, good points and bad, both towards employees and customers. By sharing stories, companies define "who they are" and "what they stand for". And just like the tribes of old, the strong leaders of today's companies distinguish themselves by being good storytellers, voices that employees listen to, are inspired by and respect". (Fog and Budtz ans Yakaboylu 2005:16)

David Boje highlight the importance of using storytelling within organization-he refers to the narrative as being a curtail element of organization strategy, development and learning.

In his further research he focused on exploring how integrating the studies of storytelling and complexity thinking illuminate human behavior. (Boje, 2012:87)

Holt refers to the special kind of branding applied exclusively to culture industry products such as musicians-which is cultural branding. He claims that cultural branding consist the product people like to use to express or define themselves-including lifestyle, image, badge or ego- expressive products. (Holt 2004:5) If brand has been valuable and had a positive reputation people will recommend it forward. Also connection to the brand with high reputation is perceived as quality and positive impact on identity values.

“When it comes to creating a powerful brand narrative, the persona – the articulated form of the brand’s character and personality – comes first.” Boje (2014:133)

Building the brand identity was also for decades associated with aspirational figures which could be charismatic, charming, good looking or wealthy. Holt build up the model which contains a comparison of four different branding models. (Holt 2004:14) Model also explores characteristics describing that interest in the brand could be an awakening by different elements, for example interaction with the brand or building a personal relationship. Brand can be recommended by word of mouth and receiver can perceive benefits for using product. Customers could personalize and flex the brand in order to fit personal biography or create own rituals when using product.

## ***2.4 Storytelling in Historiography***

Scholars refers to historical studies as a subject which should be a matter of concern to any educated citizen. (White 2010: x)

Hayden White was claimed to be a person who worked a Philosophy of History-White believed in history that it is the inherent value of fostering a historical consciousness.

Vico called historical knowledge as human self-knowledge. Specifically, knowledge on how human beings make themselves through knowing themselves. (Vico, quoted in White 2010)

Historical knowledge is closely related to orally transmitted knowledge in a form of a story.

David Boje when reflecting on development of story as an element of human life highlights that evolution of language, emotions and ability to create stories was the key to the survival of human race. Stories were crucial for the symbolic cultures formation as also overcoming and overwhelming anxiety. (Boje 2010: 20)

White referred to the oral accounts of historical reality best kind of raw material "proper historiography" therefore written ones. (White 2010: x)

Oldest studies of storytelling were concerned with theology and hermeneutic studies of Old and New Testament, The Coran and other religious epics. Religious stories provided people deeper meaning in life, offering deeper insight to why we are here and how we should live, and providing comfort in our darker times. (Fog and Budtz and Yakabulu 2005: 16) Therefore there has been big development of storytelling in verse in prose in Medieval Times.

White called presentation of the past being dramatic-laying out a spectacle of the great events and conflicts of past times. (White 2010: x)

The closest to the storytelling represented by subject of this thesis is historical storytelling. In historical narrative –the order is obviously a story –complete events, narrated by a historian. The product of that act, potentially or virtually capable of surviving it in a form of a written text, a recording, or a human memory. Historical writing is like past and present brought together in a comprehensive vision of historical reality. Historiography was regarded as branch of rhetoric and a division of moral

philosophy. (White 2010: xviii)

White refers to the words of Jacques Barzun who once said that although one could introduce the young to the history, one could not really *teach it*, because history, real history, it had to be written. He does not mean that the real history exists only in writing - White claims he was right in the sense that the genre of professional historiography has to be written-oral *history* is a contradiction of terms. He argues that information about the past can be delivered orally- people are able to memorize and store all facts and information but it has to be taken from somewhere or transferred by you in a written narrative form or argument of some kind. He argues that only in that form it can be submitted to other historians for assessment and criticism. (White 2010: x)

Different tendencies took place over the time representing historical writing. One of the most known researchers in historical narrative - White (1996) argued that scientific prose used to describe historical facts was dry and impersonal. Therefore, quite often during the times as also modern historiography researchers are calling for the return to narrative in historical writing. (White 1996: 58) Form of stories were claimed to be reviving interest in history. In narrative imaginary or real situations can be presented with perfect transparency. White claims that narrative history is presenting the things just as they really happened as also can add dramatic perspective on historical event. Those stories often adopt the elements of a good story including concepts such as fate, destiny, real people fighting in the history inherit heroic characters-they become more interesting than ordinary people. In historiographical storytelling there is a conflict climaxes and heroes just like in the fairy tales. Historical storytelling portrayed the passing of the time, rulers, battles, and way of living and individual stories.

Storytelling traditionally was a preferred mode of representation and exploration of historical discourse. (White 1996: 58) In historiography narrative accounts of real events either individual lives or social prices and provide explanation of such events. "They explain the events of which they treat by endowing them with a kind of coherence- the structures, tonalities, auras and meanings typically met with in " stories". (White 1996: 65)

Historical storytelling explains real events by representing them as possessing the coherence of generic plot types-epic, comic, tragic, facial and so on. (White 1996: 65)

There are existing different forms of historical writing- descriptive, analytical or lyrical.

Descriptive writing portrays things as they really happen; represent the events with perfect transparency. It presents more graphic image of unfamiliar events; time frame narration reflects the fragmentation of history.

Lamarque claims that catalogue of descriptive events is not making narrative. Narrative have to have essential temporal dimension as also events must be described not the things. (Lamarque (1990), cited in Nash 1991: 131)

Analytical writing looks at history with big dose of analysis of the facts, individual actions and the flow of the events. It might be accompanied in analysis what could happen if the actions will be undertaken differently. Narrative tends to be richer than analytical writing in containing the depth of meaning.

Lamarque pointed out the narrator existing in the stories that can be real or implied, he also highlighted the fact that it is not that the story exists but story is told from one perspective or another. Lyrical writing can give a dramatic perspective on historical event. (Lamarque (1990) cited in Nash 1990: 131)

David Carr has recently argued that narrative representations of historical reality can be considered realistic and veracious to the extent that human agents inhabit a sociocultural world that is structured narratively and intend their actions in such way as effectively to make of them the kind of captions about which "true" stories can be told. (Carr (1986), cited in White 1996: 67)

Narrative is a form which function as amusement, information, instruction, philosophical or theological thought.

There are a few definitions of the storytelling or corresponding narrative. Closest definition of the story which can be used to describe the musical storytelling done by Sabaton therefore the subject of this thesis is Boje's definition from 1991 "By a story I mean oral or written performance interpreting past or anticipated experience"

## 2.5 Elements of a good story

Elements and characteristics of a good story

Reference, year	Story characteristic
Gabriel, 2000	Drama or/and Conflict (elements)
Gabriel, 2000	Plot (element)
Mc Cabe and Peterson, 2004	Written in a problem solving setting (characteristic)
Albrighton, 2013	Familiarity (characteristic)
Albrighton, 2013	Is activating brain (characteristic)
Levi-Strauss, 1966	Is reflecting fundamental structure of our minds (characteristic)
Levi-Strauss, 1966	Simplicity (characteristic)
Levi-Strauss, 1966	Unique idea (element)
Levi-Strauss, 1966	Arch A to B leading to C (element)

(Figure 3: Elements and characteristics of a good story)

Human beings enjoy stories. In fact, listening to the stories makes the brain more active. By simply telling a story, somebody can plant ideas, thoughts and emotions into the listeners' brains.

Copywriters refers to the research done in the field of politics and commercial stories to build up the theory of a good story-as being one of the most popular techniques in marketing communication. (Albrighton, 2013)

Stories are narratives with plots and characters, generating emotion in narrator and audience, through a poetic elaboration of symbolic material. The material may be a product of fantasy or experience, including an experience of earlier narratives. Story plots entail conflicts, predicaments, trials and crises, which call for choices, decisions, actions and interactions, whose actual outcomes are often at odds with the characters' intentions and purposes.( Gabriel 2000:239)

Drama is one of the elements building the trust of the receiver while taking out bad bits damages it. To capture attention story needs dramatic development and emotional dynamics. (Albrighton, 2013)

Every story in order to be a story contains message of a moral, plot, some kind of conflict and characters. In a simplest words story is a set progression of events with beginning middle and the end. Originally proposed by Aristotle as rules for dramatists, they apply equally well to any story. They are the unity of action, the unity of place and the unity of time. In traditional stories ideological moral

statement has been placed as a central theme through the story-most of us remembers those heard during childhood, told by parents or teachers. Message is transmuted through the conflict in those stories, communicating and helping to learn about world, develop imagination, grasp abstract concepts such as good or bad, fear or hope, loyalty or betrayal.

Familiarity is another factor making a story more powerful as well as ability to find the connection to own life or events which happened.

Levi-Strauss (1966) claims that story form reflects a fundamental structure of our minds.

Most of the people will agree that story is good when it is well written. This way is most likely to be more memorable. Unique idea or subject is another element capturing reader or listeners' attention.

Simplicity of the story was also listed as its strength, especially in commercial storytelling. Researchers' claims that narrative should be like and simple arc leading from "an A" to a "B" where a reader is able to follow into conclusion being a "C"

McCabe and Peterson (2004) refers to story as being good when it written in a problem solving setting. "Something happens to protagonists which cause them to respond to or to set up a goal. Their actions or their attempts to accomplish the goal result in some resolution or state of affairs that terminates the episode.

Cooperative stories were described in four criteria are effective- first of realistic, relevant, two-way communication style, degree of sustainability.

Storytelling touches so many different areas of life, business, education therefore it not easy task to select and focus on one theory listing attributes of creating good stories. Perhaps creative writing is a discipline often used in performing arts and humanities, which encompasses different kind of writing for academic and professional purposes. Many courses focus on poetry, prose and drama. Speech, expression and gesture also the way of organizing communication also influence the quality of storytelling.

### ***3. Research Method***

#### ***3.1 Methodological Approach of the Study***

This is a qualitative empirical case study research. Qualitative research is described by Halfpenny (1979: 799) as soft, flexible, subjective, suitable for case study, speculative and grounded. Qualitative research can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena. Qualitative research is the best solution while dealing with a case study. Qualitative research is method more suitable for exploring the stories in relation to the case. It is focused on analyzing words and images rather than numbers. (Hammerslay 1992: 156)

Qualitative research is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people's lives. Qualitative data are gathered primarily in the form of spoken or written language. Possible data sources are interviews with participants, observations, documents, and artifacts. The data are usually transformed into written text for analytic use. (Polkinghorne 2005: 135) For the purpose of this research it was important to get a direct access to the experience of the individual as also one's thoughts, relations, emotions. Interviews seemed to be largely straightforward, simple way of proceeding it, with just keeping in mind how well one is able to describe thoughts, relations or emotions.

Due to the fact that this research deals with such an abstract subject such as creativity, emotions and experience approach of this research is largely inductive.

### 3.2 Case study research

Case study research allows to get a rich description of one particular case as also analyze it in detail. One case was selected for the purpose of this research. Case study allows getting particular understanding or insight into a contemporary phenomenon. The case illustrates a particular issue of historical storytelling in music. The case study is portrayed by the fans of the band who are presenting its detailed description and setting. Case study was described by Farquhar as particularly suitable for description (Farquhar 2009: 8), explanation and exploratory research, Yin suggested that case study explain, describe, illustrate and enlighten. (Yin 2009: 15)

Interview in the case study is used to obtain descriptions and definitions by others-in case of this research it was to get the band member's and fans point of view. Case will be not seen same way by everyone therefore strongest points are going to be highlighted in the results as multiple similarities in the answers. Each of the interviewee is expected to have a unique experience in relation to the case study.

Stake in affable way described gathering information for the case study research-everything starts from first impressions and observations. He describes first process as being informal and in large scale based on the interest without yet committing to the case (Stake 1992: 52)

"Need for a case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, case study allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristic of real life events-such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial process, neighborhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries.

As case study is richer when involves bigger number of data collation methods therefore- band member and the fans, plus additional materials were used in the study. Yin (2003: 2)

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Case study stands for answering the questions "how?" and "why" asked about contemporary events therefore it is most appropriate for my study.

”The basic idea is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there maybe a variety of specific purposes and research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible.” (Punch, 1998: 150)

This thesis is focused on one case study explore in detail phenomena of storytelling regarding its use and its effects on artistic outcome. Case study copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points and as one result.

Referring to the Yin case study design and methods research is following its key steps such as key information about the case. Case study uses multiple sources of evidence in case of this research multiple fans interview as also artist interview forming the chain of evidence. (Yin 2003: 34)

Case study benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis-in my thesis those included the history of the band as well as press material and lyrical content. Another step of processing case study is to focus on key issues within the case- analysis of the themes in order to understand its complexity. (Creswell 2007: 75)

Qualitative data about the case study is aggregated and sorted to clarify the definition of the case and the case itself. The case is divided into researching small aspects within the case, what allow to discover those more in depth. Farquhar stated that case study is also concern with studying the phenomenon in context therefore the findings are giving an insight into how phenomenon accrues within a given situation. (Farquhar 2002:6)

Stake describes quantitative studies as working with unique relationship to fashion or unique description of the case what is adequate to Sabaton and its fans.

### **3.3 Selected Case**

*"Time has worn the soldiers down*

*Marched for many miles*

*In the eastern lands so cursed*

*Time to make a stand*

*Tsar has scorched his nation's land*

*Nothing to be found*

*Hunger grasp the soldiers heart*

*20 000 men strong*

*Listen, excuse for a king*

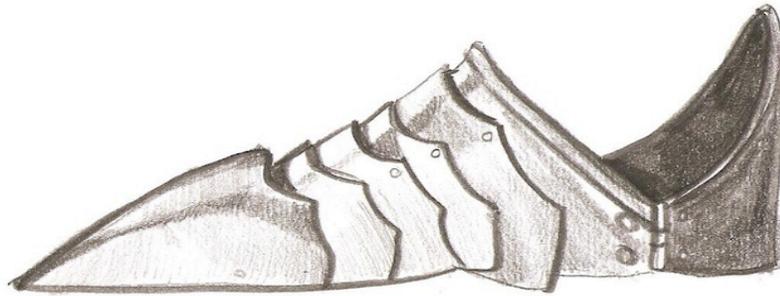
*Trust me, this fight you can't win..."*

*(Sabaton-Poltava)*

Selected case for this thesis is Swedish band called Sabaton presenting wide selection of historical events as memorable stories. In the public opinion within music business and heavy metal fans band Sabaton is known for its strong brand and obvious identity because everybody knows that it is “that band” singing about history. It is interesting and quite unusual case—a band who linked two elements, precisely in their lyrics illustrating historical events and highlighting those with energy of their music.

This has been ideal choice for the case study of my thesis to present an artist who keeps a stylistic and thematic consistency which in the past could be noticed only on the concept albums and uses this storytelling as its strong brand.

Sabaton is a good choice to study storytelling as each of the songs presents different historical event, they are observers of historical events, sometimes they are using first person narrative and talking from the position of a fighting soldiers. Album covers usually include the motives of helmets, bullets, armors, flags, military symbols such as eagle, camouflage. When performing live singer wears “bullet proof looking vest” and usually all members wear camouflage trousers.



(Figure 4: Sabaton as a part of an armour)

The name of the band can be found in Renaissance books presenting the armor of chivalry.

Sabaton is a part of knight's armor covering the foot. It been shaped similar to contemporary footwear.

Sabaton as an artist is successful and known from their historical topics therefore I want to find out how they are using storytelling in the different ways around their musical creativity.

It is a 5 members band formed in Falun, Sweden in 1999. Four albums were printed under the flag the Black Lodge Record, followed by four released by Nuclear Blast. First album *Primo Victoria* was issued publicly in 2005. It is a concept album which title means First Winning-which for band members means releasing a first album as also being a tribute to the soldiers of Normandy Landing. Album was very successful in Sweden, followed by concerts in Sweden and Germany also festivals which fragments were released on DVD.

Second album titled *Attero Dominatus* was recorded in January 2006. After its release band went on tour with bands Edguy and Dragonforce, it increased sale of previous album and resulted in success of *Attero Dominatus*, classifying on the first place in sales of metal albums in Sweden and appreciation in the other countries even if promotion was quite minimal.

In 2007 Sabaton played 80 concerts in 20 different countries including the biggest festivals in Europe. In 2008 band returned to Abyss Studios where a bum the *Art Of War* was recorded. It is based on the

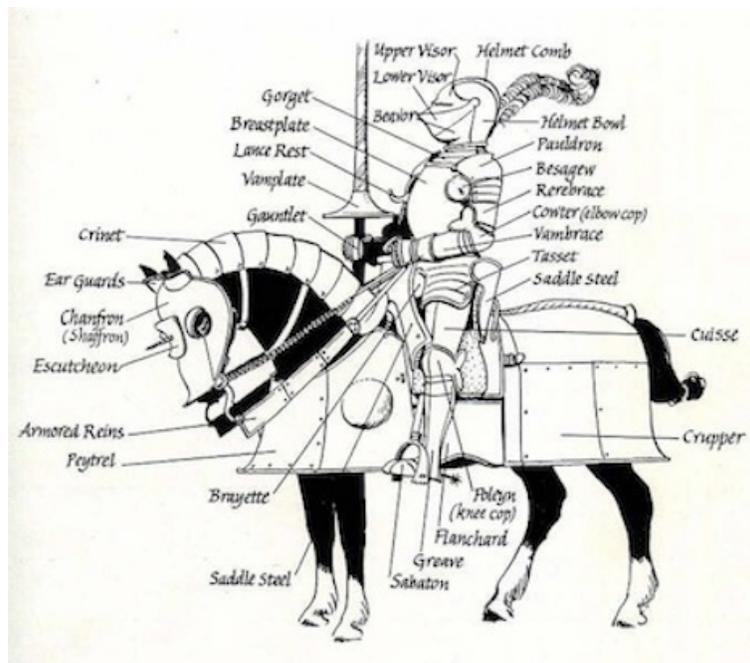
ancient book written by Sun Tsu- military general, strategic and tactician describing 13 different European Battles in relation to 13 books written by Sun Tsu.

Next album Coat Of Arms was released in 2010 by major record label Nuclear Black who also decided to re-release all previous albums adding some bonuses. Signing the contract with Nuclear Blast resulted in an extensive touring period in Europe and USA.

After those albums come the time to release concept album Carolus Rex describing history of Swedish empire. This album was released in mother language- Swedish language and in English.

In 2012 band faced lineup changes as four members decided to leave the band due to family or other reasons. With new members they still went on the tour in United States, followed by European tour. Some of the materials will be released in the form of DVD.

Swedish Empire tour from September until middle November of 2012 included Australia, Eastern Europe and USA and right after it ended band entered the studio to record new album with new members. The adventure continues...



(Figure 5: Sabaton-part of armour)

### 3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Primary source of information planned to be the data collected during the interviews with the artist although the idea has evaluated as the study progressed into including fan-artist dialogue.

Interviews supposed to generate data that gives an authentic insight into people's experience. (Silverman 2000: 90)

Interviews are proven to enter territories such as "inner experience", "language", "cultural meanings", or forms of "social interaction". (Silverman 2000: 89) In case of my research participants are describing in the interviews about their experience of creating music and presenting historical stories, therefore it has been a combination of inner experience, language and cultural meanings. In case of the group of fans they received, decoded, experience and interact with that art form they were talking about listening to the ready piece of music and how it effects their other activities, therefore the inner experience. Beyond artistic creation happens dialogue between the artist and the fans which form of social interaction.

Interviews are narratives that are making actions explainable and understandable to those who otherwise might not understand. (Miller and Glassner 1997: 107, cited in Silverman 2000)

#### Data collection steps

Step 1	Decision on interviews being primary source of information.	Background research on the artist, the albums, listening to the songs and paying close attention to the lyrics. Collecting and reading existing press material on the artist. Preparing research questions.
Step 2	Identifying the interviewees.	Including fans in the research to discover fan-artist dialogue.
Step 3	Contacting artist and fans.	First contact and interview request with 2 band members being lyricist and composers, getting interview approval from one member. Contacting to administrator of fans online discussion forum and deciding and agreeing on the form of fans interview. Commencing the interviews.

Step 4	Dividing collected material into 2 groups.	Asking fans from group one further questions about their dialogue with the artist.
Step 5	Interviewing the artist.	Proceeding the interview, reviewing the answers, asking to complete few answers.
Step 6	Identifying most important themes.	Revising artist and fans interviews, content analysis: identifying similar themes, compering those, drawing out the dialogues and interactions. Writing analysis, looking for possible conclusions.

(Figure 6: Data Collection Steps)

As research is focused on storytelling the idea has developed to ask receivers how they see the artist and the creation as also how understand the stories presented by Sabaton. This idea was closely linked to the incident were artist was banned from their performance in Russia during 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad due to the fact that local authorities labeled the band as artist presenting Nazi topics. What is Sabaton? Is Sabaton brand clear or is it often misunderstood? This made certain one of the goals of the research to give the complete portrait of Sabaton as a brand and its storytelling. It raised need to include fans opinions how they would describe the artist, what made them most interested in the artist, if they are researching the topics presented by Sabaton and are they able to remember the events presented in the songs and if they are able to contact them to the particular historical fact.

Additional information needed to fully formulate research question was if people are questioning bands research during songwriting and the credibility of the presented historical facts and therefore getting the information from the band about their efforts during the creative process.

Additional to the interviews is data collection process done prior the interviews, in order to get in-depth knowledge about stories presented by the artist and evaluation of musical stylistics. This data included websites of the artist, albums and information provided there, archive interviews.

This is how the whole process been described in research diary:

“There are several groups of Sabaton's fans and discussions around the band activity on the forums present on-line. Some are divided as national ones for example Dutch, Polish, and German as also

official international one placed on the official webpage of the band. People from all around the world are actively discussing there and exchanging their information according to the Sabaton and other topics.

Collecting the data started from observing the international, therefore official Sabaton forum, reading information people are providing there, checking the relevance of conversation to the interview questions. At that point it was not clearly defined in what way to proceed the interviews. The most familiar form would be conversation, through Skype or on the phone, allowing asking freely additional questions or explaining unclear issues. This way allows getting more defined results although require a lot of scheduling with interviewees and is more time consuming. After registering on the forum I wanted to send an interview to active members of the forum, who are clearly interested in the subject of history or people who were sending idea of interesting historical fact to that band- such a people was my primary target due to the form of interview question.

I faced a problem with my idea as it turned out that one is not allowed to send a private message to the individual members of the forum. I was worried that I will not be able to get information needed at all. As a person who is not too familiar and active in a social networking therefore I was not feeling too comfortable in creating so called "public post" and discuss everything on the forum. I wanted to avoid that people will read answers of the other before research is concluded and analyzed as it could influence their answers by adopting the style or following the way of thinking of the others.

I decided to formulate a message to the administrator of the forum expelling the purpose of my research and asking if there is a way to send a private message to selected members. I got pleasant and fast replay informing me that it's not technically possible to send a message to selected members. Jessie- the administrator of the forum proposed me an alternative- she could send a group message to all members of the forum and interested people can get in touch directly with me. We agreed on that and rewrote my initial message explaining the purpose of the research.

Initial problem turned out to be just beneficial for the research as it provided wider range of people contacting me and therefore rises the creditability of the research. It also got resulted in larger number of response than initially planned.

I altered some of interview questions to be able to ask more questions if people will show more interest in some of the topics. Few people of interviewees fits profile of my "target interviewee" who did gave a band some song ideas, I could ask them about a whole process, in some cases even providing me a transcript or send ideas or even a poem which could be a base for the song. Some people admitted that they got idea for the song and briefly shared it with me even if it was not yet send to the band.

For of public request to participate in interview for the research definitely opened the range of my research and made it more credible and included more types of people than initially planed. It also resulted in unexpected but very great help from the members of international forum who translated my explanation to the research into German and Dutch and invite people from Dutch Battalion and German Saboteurs Fanclub to participate in the interview.

Interviewees are referenced by the first name. Some of interviewed people introduced themselves by providing me more information about themselves such as age and location. I asked the rest of people if they are willing to provide such information and if I have not received those personal data I left the age and location out from the reference brackets.

After brief test I decided to conduct all interviews by email as it turned out to be a fast and convenient way of getting answers. People were allowed to ask me questions about the research or ask if something was not clear, although it hardly happened. I exchanged few emails with people who wanted to know more about the research and its purpose and every time it was a good practice in introducing my research as also clearing out and putting things to the right order in my mind.

Questions were formulated in a way it encouraged people to describe their experience in more detail. I also wanted to leave the question to their own interpretation as it allowed me to get contrasting, varied answers or get more personal opinion- this will be expanded in the analysis. (for example people described a band describing their personality as individual persons-being warm "great hug gives"- or in a way related to their performance and touring habits or as intended straight definition of a genre.)

After concluding the first interview question, which from the start was planned as a test as I was not sure its outcome did not bring any result to the research. It was a question about a favorite story from

childhood- to see if there were any similarities in those and current preferences in life-for example in music. Some of the people was not able to answer the question or told about event which had place in the childhood but it did not show any similarities.

Research ended up with a total number of 20 fan interviews. Although I all answers to the interview questions were entirely clear and in most of the cases attaching meaning to people experience some people mentioned as English is not their first language they had to spend some time to translate and formulate answers. There is a possibility that the answers will be more accurate if the research will be conducted in their native language.

Interview with the artist was planned to be in-depth and excessive although I faced the problem with getting not too much information. Two members of the band supposed to be interviewed for the purpose of my research. I send two emails informing about my research and kindly asking about the participation and most convenient way to process it. I was opened for a face-to-face interview, Skype or phone interview in the worst case for myself but if its only possible way to precede the interview.

Unfortunately, my research turned out to take place simultaneously with the artist recording new album. I got a prompt replay to the second email addressed to the e-mail of one of the bands members recommended by the one of the creators of German fan club.

Pär Sundstöm one of the former members, composers and lyricist of the band and the bass player informed me that the other person I request interview with Joakim Broden is busy writing the new album therefore Pär will be the only one person available and unfortunately only by e-mail. He agreed to return the questions around the time after upcoming bank holidays.

When it comes to the fans interviews this form turned out with a very good outcome and clarity in answered questions although with discussing the process of composing music and writing lyrics a more direct form like a conversation could stimulate more ideas and answers. I tried to formulate my question as clear as possible and hoped to get descriptive answer.

After receiving answers, I was not fully satisfied with the length of the answers as I did not give me full

information on creative process seen from the inside. I exchanged few emails with Pär for clarification of few questions where he stated that some elements of creative process are difficult to describe, what I understand but answers to few questions got clearer and i had to remain satisfied with answers I got as Pär informed me of lack of time to answer further questions.

Then next step was to familiarize with the data by carefully reading the data though and underlining the most relevant things. Data was analyzed in a form of content analysis of the interviews where I been looking for similar answers within fans, especially how they percept the stories.

Gradually I was getting an overview of themes discussed in the data from the band and the fans. I looked at collected materials in line with analysis of overall concept of the band. I focused on the marked sentences and issues in the data and compared and contrasted them within the different respondents.

Data collected in the interviews was compared and concluded with a critical reflection on the storytelling by Sabaton.

Finally, I was able to develop the key themes present in the data trough that the key findings could be described.” (research diary, december 2013-may 2014)

*"Snipers move unseen in snowfall  
Force them to retreat and recall  
Fight the russian rule and their demand  
With molotov coctail in hand  
No fear of their tanks  
Death or glory*

*A slice of a knife to a throat  
And their blood turns to ice  
TALVISOTA! "*

*(Sabaton-Talvisota)*

## ***4. Analysis and Results***

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*First principle of a philosophy of history: that the past which an historian studies is not a dead past, but a past which in some sense is still living in the present” (Collingwood, 1978: 97)*

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This chapter presents the two types of interviews done on the purpose of this research. First part concerns the band member talking about their storytelling, second part concerns the interview of 20 Sabaton's fans talking about how they receiving Sabaton's stories.

### ***4.1 Band member talking about Sabaton***

Many researchers including those focusing on storytelling being a good tool in business listed few elements of the good story with conflict being a curtail one.

Each of Sabaton song presents a fight for freedom of some nation, conflict between two different nations. Stories got a plot and feature the opposing characters representing the good and the evil- hero vs villain.

There are many nations stories told on Sabaton's albums. Each is short depiction of historical event, struggle in battle. Music, and charismatic persona of the lead singer makes it even more live. Fans describe him as a great singer and great entertainer; people know the lyrics and like to sing along.

Stories are presented from the fighting side of view, never favoring or glorifying one of the nations. There are multiple monuments for the war heroes.



(Figure 7: band's promo picture)

Pär Sundström- former member of Sabaton, bassist as also composer and lyricist of Sabaton described the band as himself- *"Since everything I do is basically Sabaton. I dont have any other intestests so when I wake up until when I go to bed I do Sabaton stuff. I am never someone else. We are all one band. Im just the guy who leads the pack!"*

In 2005 while writing Primo Victoria album band decided to be consistent with historical topics, it was nothing what was decided when the band was created even if the name fits in the concept quite well. Nowadays they have been labeled as a metal band singing about history, this is what their fans believe in and expect, therefore continuation of stylistic consistency is a way of not disappointing their audience.

For Sabaton creative process comes very naturally, Pär said that he usually has an idea for the album, then he discusses it with Joakim and after that they decide to make it true, long before studio sessions. Its was Pär's initiative to invite the fans to participate in creating ideas for the songs or album. It happened during song writing for Coat of arms album.

Lyrics are usually written during the night in the studio, while Sabaton is recording instruments. They find topic they like and write about it.

*"We try to fit the concept of the song with the mood of the music yes. If we have a song like” Final Solution” we need a sad theme for example."*

*"Country in depression  
Nation in despair  
One man seeking reasons everywhere  
Growing hate and anger  
The Fuhrer's orders were precise  
Who was to be blamed and pay the price!  
Wicked propaganda  
Turning neighbors into foes  
Soldiers of the third Reich searching homes  
And then the former friends are watching  
As they are rounded up one by one  
Times of prosecutions has begun... "*  
(Sabaton-Final Solution)

As the most interesting "idea" for the album Pär refereed to the presentation in the Uprising Museum in Warsaw. It took place during the premier of the video 40:1 and the history of the Uprising and showing of the museum to the band members done by the museum director.

The museum is indeed an inspiring storyteller- its mission was to redefine the outlook of traditional museum as being boring and mild. During the years the directors of Uprising Museum in Warsaw were thinking how to talk about the past to the contemporary viewer good enough that the message will be easy to read, authentic, rooted in facts. They decided to connect modern technology with history to recreate atmosphere of 60's Warsaw daily life among the 63 days of battle. They are using various multimedia techniques- sound, light and vision. Interior of the museum is stylized as the streets of Warsaw including cobbles under visitors' feet and ruins of the building around and steel monument in the Centre. A museum offers variety of additional events such as concerts, workshops, movie festivals to reach youth and teenagers.

Museum also open a website giving a possibility of interactive tour in Warsaw Uprising museum from any place in the world. It is possible one of the very few museums hosting concerts or album promotions.



(Figure 8: Photography from Warsaw's Uprising Museum  
<http://www.1944.pl/galerie/fototeka/foto/5327/kategoria/70>)

*"Favorite story heard in childhood- Mainly such of monsters in the woods, I do not believe in monsters in the woods anymore. I think people are far scarier than fairytale monsters. And reality is much more frightening than fiction."*

Pär admitted that for him interest in history came with song writing. They are trying to get the history into by being a metal band and get to know more about history bit by bit. Touring is taking quite a lot of the year and he tries to plan it in a way they will see historical sites, battlefields, and important places.

*"The most interesting one was 70<sup>th</sup> years anniversary of battle of Wizna in Poland. We played a concert there and I will never forget that."*

Therefore, the concerts took place in the battlefield that is described in the song 40:1.

Concert was arranged by the organization, which helped with many of events and music videos when it comes to Sabaton presenting history of Poland.

People living in Wizna were asked to comment the fact that Swedish band writes songs about battle in their territory- one person asked why local or national artist are not doing that but by that question he

highlighted strength of Sabaton the unique idea and ability to tell the stories.

It has been interesting if activity of Sabaton is mirroring members personal hobbies or interest. The biggest areas of interest seem to be music for all the members. Sabaton become a lifestyle for Pär its also fills up all this time. Sometimes he got time to watch historical documentary or play a video game. Telling historical stories is a part of their musical career although is seen as less important then music. Band members hear a lot of stories of people learning more about history due to listening to their lyrics therefore in a way they will call themselves world educators.

After describing stories of different battles Sabaton felt the need to also highlight their own national identity and focus on the history of Sweden, for their native audience as also make international audience more familiar with bands homeland's history. It was often asked by international journalists. Carolus Rex album was written in two languages. Written in their native language - Swedish was very natural opposed to the big challenge of writing in two languages at once in the time band usually spend to wrote one. These album lyrics were send to the history professor to make sure that band got everything right.

*"Did the Nazis win the battle of Stalingrad?"*

*We have been reached by the news that some organizations and political representatives who claims to have studied us has come to the conclusion that Sabaton are a nazi band, and because of that our scheduled appearance at the 70:th anniversary of the battle of Stalingrad should be cancelled. This show is to take place in a few weeks in Volgograd.*

*Further, these people believe that we will desecrate the Russian flag during our concert (which we have never done and of course have no intention of doing) and they are now trying their best to ban Sabaton from all of Russia!!!*

*We know that the people of Russia is far more intelligent than this and thus we hope that reason will allow us to play this concert in honors of this historical event and the Sovjet soldiers who fought for their freedom.*

*Sabaton is and has always been a NON-POLITICAL and NON-RELIGIOUS band and holds a lot of respect to the veterans of war and the heroic and non-selfish acts that was performed in a time of need.*

*Ps. It should be noted that Sabaton has been awarded honorary membership of the “Scions of the 17:th Airborne Division”, an organization that consists of veterans from the very same airborne division who fought against the nazis in “The battle of the Bulge” and “Operation Varsity”.*

*(<http://kaaoszine.fi/sabaton-saamassa-porttikiellon-venajalle/> accessed 8/03/2014)*

As I m familiar with the events that Sabaton's message was questioned, they been called a Nazi band, those have not been left without official statements given by the band. I asked Pär how they usually answered officially explaining their message.

*"We answer strictly that "Sabaton is a non-religious and non-political band and does not take stands. The lyrics are based upon historical events seen from different sides but never from the side of the band members". Sometimes people apologize, but usually they have already decided that they are right and we are wrong."*

## ***4.2 Fans interpreting the story***

This chapter presents the main topics that arose during the interviews with the fans about Sabaton. Interviewees presented the stories how they got interested in the band, which of the songs made biggest impact on them, to what extent they research the stories individually and if there is any link between the Sabaton and their hobbies. The sample of the interviews can be found in the appendixes.

*"How many wasted lives*

*How many dreams did fade away*

*Broken promises*

*They won't be coming home*

*Oh mothers wipe your tears*

*Your sons will rest a million years*

*Found their peace at last*

*As foe turned to friend*

*And forgive "*

*(Sabaton-Cliffs of Giallipoli)*

### ***4.2.1 Fans defining Sabaton***

When we think about a particular musical artist, we would think about genre, about topics they are presenting their unique characteristics-which can be found on musical, subjective or promotional form. Additional information could be if there is something more unique about the voice of the vocalist, guitar solo, drums accent, is the subject they are singing about, is the way they look or the ideology, message they want to brought out or PR around the band history or personal life of its members.

Definition usually is giving the sum of what is most obvious about artist- that is why interviews were open with Sabaton's interviewees giving own definition.

I asked each of the interviewed fans how they would describe Sabaton.

Every asked person could give a short or more developed definition without any problems, most of the people defined genre and country of origin of the band.

Here I could clearly identify two kinds of answers-some people gave a clear and complete answer such as:

*"Sabaton is a Swedish metal band who is able to capture historical facts in their songs and convey them as truthfully as can be. There is no political or propagandist intention behind it. I feel their members are just truly interested in European and also other history."* (Linda, Germany)

Here Linda also included the fact that the artist is telling the story of particular war event of different countries and they are side free or are not including any kind of political messages. This could be easily completed by a comment given by Jonathan (21, Belgium) who said that:

*"For me, they found the perfect balance between telling a story with the lyrics, and the emotions and feeling through their music. Also they try to tell the story as watching it from above and watching it through the eyes of the soldiers who fought and died there."*

Country of origin, genre, energy of the music and topics of the songs was what would be the basic facts about the band familiar to all asked persons. Further given definitions followed in the same matter in shorter versions.

*"Swedish Powermetal band, with historical lyrics which tell the stories of actual war events ."* (Esther, Dutch living in Sweden)

*"I would describe Sabaton as a powerful power metal band who sings about war and history."* (Jonathan, 21, Belgium)

*"I usually describe them as a Swedish metal band that sings mostly about military history; battles and things like that."* (Greg, 25 ,USA)

Greg also mentioned that he is asked about description of Sabaton quite often as not many people in USA have heard about it. When people are seeing their logo on Greg's t-shirt or while talking about music they become interested and ask who Sabaton is.

One of the interviewees give a definition including declaration that the artist had actually awakened his interest in history.

*"Sabaton is an amazing, powerful, interesting and awesome Swedish Heavy Metal Band which awakened my interest in history."* (Marvin, 17, Germany)

In a detailed description Marvin also referred to the live performance that accrued in quite many cases. This is how he described the experience of participating in a live event still including it in a definition:

*"I mean, when you visit a Sabaton concert it is so magic. The lights go out, The Final Countdown starts. Goose booms everywhere. And then "the March to War" followed by Joakims amazing announcement. "*

Some people included short information about their touring habits:

*"Swedish Power-Metal Band with history based-lyrics. They are a heavy-touring band with a special relationship to their fans."* (Thomas, Germany)

There were also quite many cases where people included information about band's live performances as most crucial subject in the definition without referring to the subject of the songs.

*"For me, Sabaton is a Power Metal band with outstandingly good music! Their songs have high sing-along-potential, which is fantastic for live-shows.*

*Joakim is a fantastic singer, but also a great "entertainer" on stage. OK, when I go to a metal show, I want the music."*(Ulrich, 49, Germany)

Description of Ulrich is somehow linked to the focus of another question "What made fans most interested in a band". Ulrich was not the only one who focused on live shows while answering this question. For Ulrich historical topics were something he had to get used to, as music was the trigger that got his attention. It is quite unique within a metal artist to stick into one homogenous topic but it is the factor that builds bands concept and identity. It was clear that one factor catches audience attention and after that step people are looking at the band as a whole package.

*"Their "war-stuff-only-approach" is in the beginning maybe a little bit confusing and strange. But when you get used to it, you detect so impressing stories..."*

Not only Ulrich found their lyrics and historical topic confusing at first. Carmen who was attracted to the band through music, here is what she said about her impression of the first time when she was confronting the lyrical part.

*"At first, it is the music. I love the way they sound and first didn't take care of the band itself. But when I started to LISTEN to the lyrics I was little bit irritated because they sing about "Nazi", "3<sup>rd</sup> Reich". So I started to research about their backgrounds. I was pacified after I read the bands' intentions."*

(Carmen, Germany)

Wayne (USA) while answering this question did not gave the definition of the genre but the definition entirely focused on the live performance and singer charisma:

*"Sabaton is a band that works to earn their living. They tour more often than other bands will and that can be very hard. One of the things that especially draws me to the band is their live performances.*

*Few can hold a stage the way Joakim can. That puts him in a pretty elite club which has, as its king, the late Freddy Mercury of Queen. Now Joakim is no Freddy (no one can match Freddy) but he's got that same sort of style."*

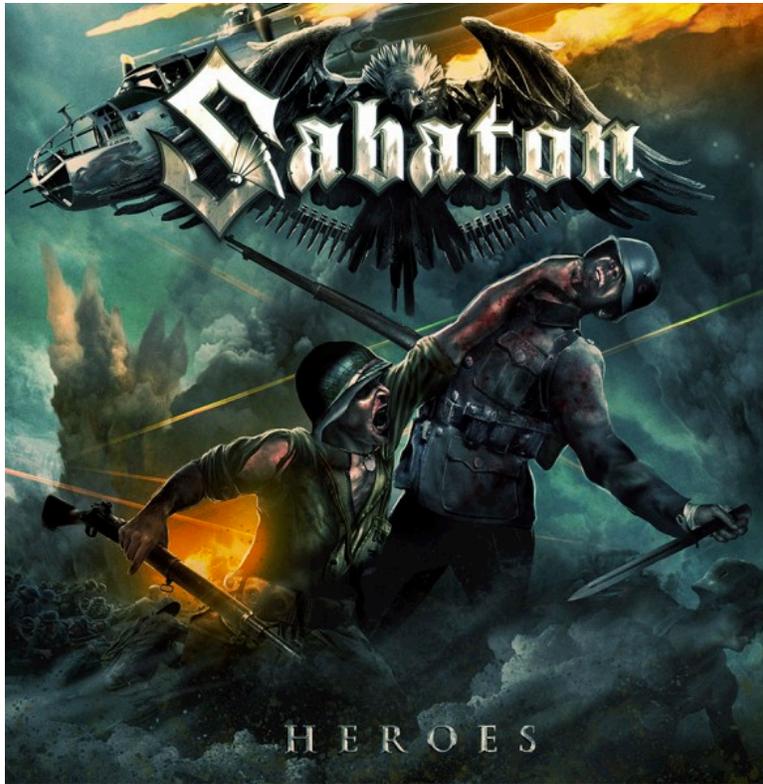
There were also people like Marvin (17, Germany) who had opposing opinion about the importance of elements in Sabaton's overall performance. For him the content of the songs was the factor to make him interested in the band. He said *"It was quite easy to get informed about the topics in the song. And this was the point where I got interested in the lyrics and in history. So for me is the history in the lyrics more important than the music. "*

From those definitions is clearly visible that there are two factors that people picked as most important to build a definition of a band Sabaton.

First factor is that people recognize the genre and the thematic area being the history. Moreover, few interviewees highlighted authenticity and credibility of stories by including in the definition that the stories are actual war events or that they are capturing historical events and presenting them as truthfully as possible.

Second factor strongly visible in the definitions is the live performance - Joakim's stage presence, entreating speeches introducing the songs or the stories and frequent tours. People referred to the interaction with the fans, 'sing along' moments, and emotions during the show such as goose booms and usually opened this topic more in the further parts of the interview.

As mentioned in the theory part speech, expression and gesture also the way of organizing communication also influence the quality of storytelling therefore the stage expression of Joakim Broden might influence the way people are receiving the message and being the factor of making it more powerful.



(Figure 9: Sabaton's album cover 2014)

#### ***4.2.2 Interest in history***

"Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it" (George Santayana, 1905)

People interest and relation to the history is an important factor in profiling a Sabaton's fans. Two questions covered people's interest in the history. One of those questions was how people came across the band. Few people mentioned that they have been generally interested in history and this is how they found the artist and why they have been listening to Sabaton on regular basis. Other group mentioned that the songs awaken their interest or they even got interested in history through listening to the Sabaton.

One of the interviewees-Selina (22, Netherlands) said straight forward why she got interested in a band: *"Also I like it that they don't sing about sex and drugs but about things that actually matter. That's really important to me."*

Homogeneity and lack of clear concept can be boring for people, sometimes through art experience people want to find some kind of deeper meaning, something to think about or discover deeper.

Most of the interviewees got interested in the band through the fact that they are singing about war and all its facets. They stated that this factor makes it completely different from what other bands are singing about.

Viktor Shishkin (Russia, 42) mentioned that music and lyrics made him interested in the artist. *"I like their energy and I found some very interesting historic events in their songs which were quite new to me. In general I am interested in history."*

Greg who has been profoundly interested in military history, especially the period from Second World War onward, but professionally is a writer of various sorts of fiction- short stories sometimes novels commented from the writer's point of view that lyrics of Sabaton are admirable and not easy to replicate. He stated that Sabaton's music and lyrics provide him a source of inspiration:

*"I listen to music on a fairly regular basis, and in it I find inspiration for life and for my writing. Metal is one of my main genres of music. Finding a band that combines the two of my interests is pretty amazing. Looking up events that their songs draw from also tends to be pretty interesting, and I've learned some things from it. I've actually tried a few times to write similar content, and haven't had good luck, so I know the band puts an ace effort into what they do. They don't tell the whole story of course, they're musicians, not professors, but many are inspired like me to go read up on the details of things after hearing their music."*

Further interviewees listed quite a few historical events they found about through listening to Sabaton and researching the topic further. Few listed events related to Finland during II World War which are described in the song "White Death" describing a fine Finnish Sniper.

One Wayne (USA) describes it as *"What happened to Finland during WWII is something that very few people know and that everyone SHOULD know."*

Jessie (USA) mentioned that she tries to learn a little about each song and if that event caught her interest she will look for more information to learn more. This is how she described Sabaton's

storytelling and her personal interest in history.

*"The events that Sabaton writes about are definitely memorable. I was not taught about world history in high school and did not have a great amount of knowledge of either world wars or the battles involved. Having learnt about each Sabaton song has helped me to call these things and learn more about them. At the moment I am quite interested in the Battle of Monte Cassino and the Battle of Britain, although I find it hard to say which song/event has impacted me the most. I would go so far as to say that they have all impacted me a great deal, and continue to do so, the more I learn and realize just how important it is for younger generations not to forget what happened."*

Ulrich (49, Germany) and few other fans stated that without any problems are able to link the song to particular historical fact.

*"Although I don't know each and every single word of every song by heart, I'm pretty sure to have a more or less fundamental knowledge of what they are talking about."*

Anna-Maria (50, Germany) said that the topics of the song and the way how its presented made her most interested in Sabaton.

*"A band singing about war about battles even WWII and just singing, they'll never ever judge."*

*" All of those stories (presented by Sabaton) so far are a part of my knowledge. Only the story about The White Death and Talvisota were a little bit outside so I have done additional research. But then I asked my colleague from Finland and she told me lots of additional facts.*

*So far The Price Of A Mile did the deepest impact to me. That is a song about a battle in WWI and in my opinion (and feeling) it is an Anti-War-Hymn. The second one is Final solution and then Rise of Evil.Into The Fire is Heavy Metal in its finest."*

Quite many of interviewees refereed to the song 40:1 as the one making the biggest impression on them. Song describes the battle of Wizna which took place in 1939. During that 3 days battle 750 Polish Soldiers fought against 60 000 members of German Army.

Greg (25, USA) also mentioned that there were the facts he did not know about before getting to know the band he also listed Wizna among with Passchendaele and Monte Cassino.

*"I know a fair number of the events they reference. I was already familiar with some like Operation Overlord, the Battle of Midway, the Siege of Bastogne, and the Battle of Kursk, Others, like the Battle of Monte Cassino, Battle of Wizna, the saboteurs at Telemark, the exploits of Simo Häyhä, the 'Ghost Division', I wasn't familiar with prior, but did reading after learning about them from the band"*

Sometimes band inspired fans to revise their history lessons, make research and read more about the themes presented in the song about which they did not know much about. Some people had particular interest in one period in history and Sabaton extended their horizon. Many of the interviewees were interested in visiting battle fields or historical sites described in songs.

*"I'm interested in history but more in the history of the 19th and 20th century. This came through...Sabaton :) I think this is the most interesting part of the human history. All those crazy wars, crazy people and also all the sh\*t that happened here in my country (Germany). It is a really sad story in the part of human history, but there are so many little details in between. Also after WW2 there are so many amazing facts and interesting things. It is much fun to learn about it. And we all could learn from events like this."(Marvin, Germany)*

It is not only my interviewees mentioning the song 40:1 song as extremely valuable for remembering the history and war heroes. During this research I came across the article written for a newspaper "Dobry znak"(transl. Good Sign) written by Kazimierz Adamski titled "Szwedzi mówią: Polsko pamiętaj"(Swedes says: Poland, remember!) He refers to the fact that many historians worldwide claim the Defence of Wizna one of the most heroic but also one of the most unknown events of II World War. He questions how many of native citizens of Poland remember Captain leading during the battle- Captain Reginis as also other of highly meaningful events of own country history. He listed events such as details as Warsaw's Battle taking place in 1920, September Campaign of 1939, Warsaw's Uprising and changes related to the collapsing of Communism in 1989.

The battle of Wizna finally came out from the shadow and became more recognizable worldwide because of Sabaton.

*"The 8th of September it starts  
The rage of the Reich  
A barrage of mortars and guns  
Stand past, the bunkers will hold  
The captain has pledged his life  
I'll face my fate here!  
The sound of artillery strike  
So fierce  
The thunder of guns*

*So come, bring on all that you've got  
Come hell, come high water, never stop  
Unless you are forty to one  
Your lives will soon be undone"*  
*(Sabaton 40:1)*

This is how one of my American interviewees saw the event and how quite generally he describes opinion about Polish Soldiers before getting familiar with the song 40:1.

*" Of all their songs, many of which are quite moving, I'd have to say 40:1. Many people think the Polish were fools and incompetent in warfare, and tried to charge tanks with lances. I already knew these stereotypes weren't true, but this stands as proof of that and a testament to tremendous courage in defense of their land and kin."*

Behind the idea of the song to the band is actually a grandson of Boleslaw Mielnicki a Soldier from so called Monte Cassino - Dariusz Szymanowski, who is one of the creators and a president of society to remember the Battle of Wizna "Wizna 1939". In cooperation with descendant of Captin Reginis, who happened to be a film director decided to create the music video for the song 40:1.

Sabaton visited the battlefield of Wizna and Warsaw's Uprising museum, which turned out to be inspiration for another song titled "Warsaw Uprising".

Seeing the battle field Joakim Broden the author of the song and Sabaton's singer commented "*I don't know to many people which would stay here to fight. Most of them would run away from this hell.*" (<http://gazeta-dobryznak.pl/index.php?art=646> accessed on 3/11/2013)

The band was honored by a gift of getting replica of Captain Reginis saber while performing for the 40th anniversary of the battle.

### **4.2.3 Emotional engagement with the story**

*"Always remember, a fallen soldier*

*Always remember, fathers and sons at war*

*Always remember, a fallen soldier*

*Always remember, fathers and sons at war*

*Always remember, a fallen soldier*

*Always remember, buried in history"*

*(Sabaton 40:1)*

Another question asked Sabatons fans was to tell which of the songs made the strongest impact on them. As mentioned briefly in the previous chapter 40 :1 was one of the songs opening an unknown historical fact and therefore creating some sort of impact. One of the interviewees 17 years old Marvin from Germany said that the story about The Battle of Wizna is the most impressive story he every heard. Everybody percept different stories with different emotional impact.

Ulrich Kronshage, 49 year old German male reacted very emotionally to the song 40:1. It made him very emotional just by reading it and remembering the facts of 750 Polish Soldiers fought against 60 000 of Germans, this is what he said- *"Also there are a view songs with "emotional impact" on me, which causes goosebumps. First of all I'm completely overwhelmed from watching "40:1" on the newly released Swedish Empire Live DVD at this Polish Woodstock event. Knowing the background... knowing, that there are 600000 (mostly) Polish people... their country often defeated by greater powers, the country divided and their borders moved across the European map. And then comes this Swedish Metal band, reminding them of one of the moments, when they fought back and held their ground...Believe me or not, already when THIS song is announced, it's almost "over" for me, but when the song really starts and this huge Polish flag is unfolded... I start to cry. This happened the 5 times, I've seen it so far and I fear, this will happen the next 50 times also. So I would also call this "impact"."*

Also a Final Solution song describing contraction camps got quite an emotional response. Esther Salari, a Dutch women living in Sweden, refereed to the facts that if we know people who experiencing

something that is described in the songs, for example grandparents who participated in some historical events, impact of the song becomes even more powerful.

*"The most powerful ones for me are "The Rise of Evil" and directly linked to that "Final Solution". But somehow I think everybody knows what those are all about. Since I have known several people who actually took part in the war and in the protection of people who would otherwise be transported to one these concentration camps, I've had the honor of talking to those people and listen to their stories. makes that it all comes much closer and so much more real."*

There were some topics presented on the album which were not tough in schools. Contraception camps are undoubtedly one of the cruelest acts in history.

*"I was reluctant to listen to "Final Solution" and skipped this song.*

*I'm 49, I'm German and I couldn't imagine, that it is possible and necessary to make a (Metal-) song about that. Maybe younger generations, even in Germany, are nowadays a little bit relaxed in that matter. In the end, of course, I turned this song on... and was completely satisfied with the result. The music is excellent and the lyrics are (as always!) not assailable from any kind of direction."( just to make this complete: I had accepted and learned to love this song, but still had some resentment seeing it performed in front of a "typical metalhead" and more or less drunken horde. I was present at 4 Sabaton-shows so far, where "Final Solution" wasn't played, but I saw a live-videoon You-Tube. And I defintely bow in respect for those Sabaton-fans, who behaved completely adequate and respectful during and after that song!)*

Jonathan (21, Belgium) spoke about the similar meaning as opening quote of this chapter as also emotions and sadness presented in the song:

*"I get goosebumps when I hear it and it was so emotional loaded when they played this song live. You can feel the sadness in this song. Also, for me it's important to remember this kind of stories, so we will not make the same mistakes as in the past as humanity."*

As I appeared above songs are able to affects stereotypical thinking about some nations it can be a lesson of respect - Marvin(17, Germany) described it as:

*"I research the songs sometimes. Like the 30 year war. Or the Battle of Wizna. There are so many*

*fantastic stories told by Sabaton. Sometimes I'm really proud about other nations and what they have done. Like the Battle of Monte Casino. They fought 4 month against the Nazis united in one castle. I think this is a really impressive thing. And they really have done the right thing. But most of the battles we treated in school. I could gleam with my knowledge I have gained through Sabaton "*

He also refers to the listening to Sabaton as a factor which help him present more knowledge in the school and Im guessing that he also spread that knowledge to his classmates with a big dose of enthusiasm.

Manni (52, Germany) due to his family history describe Sabaton as a metal band who touch him deeply emotionally as no other artist before. He came across the band after its have been announced for a music festival, he got a CD to check it out although did not listen to it straight away and left it waiting for weeks as he thought it will be similar to all power metal band, now he refers to that fact as a serious mistake.

From early childhood Manni was observing his grandfather picture hanging on the wall and listening to his grandmother stories about him. In 1941 he was shoot in his head by a Russian sniper. He found the stories exciting even not understanding all of it such as the facts why a country got a two names-Soviet Union and Russia. He claims that he's grandfather was a person to influence his life a lot, although nowadays is in own personal peace with the past even having Russian girlfriend.

Meanwhile Manni also mentioned that growing up in Germany still left him a feeling that " World War II just had ended yesterday" as he remembers playing around destroyed house or fining the spoon with swastika.

Germany experienced many war stories which are influencing the perception of Sabaton's songs by German fans-people recall stories told by their grandparents or their memories such as crossing the border of East and West Berlin which was reminding of war.

*"I talked with my grandfather about some presented stories of the WW2. But we mostly moved from the general history to his personal experiences.*

*Sometimes I read about a historical event, when I hear a song. But that research is very sketchily. Only to know the broad story, no details."*

*Of course "Final Solution" made strongest impact on me because it describes the situation of my grandparents in the 1930s, we talked a lot about it.*

*The songs about WW2 are memorable for me, because of my private historical knowledge. But I didn't research and know much about other wars, so it's difficult for me, to connect them.*

Music can be found as source of power, motivation, and happiness. People are feeling stronger. members of particular subculture and they are believing in a shared value. Sabaton through singing a struggle in battle can give their fans power and motivation to get through challenges they are facing in daily life.

*"When I first discovered the band I was going through a difficult time in my life and my health was such that I had very little energy to function on even a basic level, getting up in the morning was a monumental task, let alone getting through a full day. I found very powerful connection to Sabaton's music, and listening to it gave me the determination to make it through each day without giving up and to get better."(Jessie, Canada)*

Relatively young field of music therapy found that using own music can bring many benefits- can be used for relaxation, to gain energy and overcome emotional stress.

Music therapy research has found that music got positive effects to help with anxiety and depression as also help to keep creativity and optimism levels higher.

(Olpin, 2007:78)

#### **5.2.4 Relation with other interest**

People referred to their hobbies or interest that is in some way linked to history or military. Some of those hobbies reached early childhood and some were very current ones. Those connections can be an element of unique culture which is created within Sabaton's fans. This culture is a mix of interest connected in some way to the history, Sweden and Swedish culture and heavy music. Some percent of Sabaton's fans also wears clothing typical for heavy metal subculture.

*"I do wear the occasional Sabaton t-shirt and read battle stories (latest new one is about Poltava). Furthermore, I have a few hobbies in which I work with natural materials, I like felting with wool and like to burn things in wood. I've set out to try to start felting the Lion of the North picture. And I really want to try to burn the portraits of all the guys in Sabaton in wood." (Esther, Sweden)*

Ulrich Kronshage (49,Germany) mentioned playing war a little boy while Esther(Dutch living in Sweden) mentioned her and husbands hobby of making military modeling and dioramas.

*"Already in my youth my interest for history in general and warfare-history in special was raised. (I was a boy(!) and played with toy-soldiers/tanks/planes/ships/whatever...)*

*My interest reaches from ancients to more or less modern times, but with emphasis on the military aspect. (I spent the last decades of my life with model figures, so this interest never really decreased... only in the last 4 years, my "active euphoria" dwindled a bit)"*

*"History was one of my absolute favorite subject during my school years. it helped a lot that I had a teacher who new to get a story across to his students and himself was very passionate about his job. Later in life I had little use for all my history lessons. It bubbled up again when my husband started with military modelling and making dioramas. That needed research to be as accurate as possible, and I started helping him with that." (Esther)*

For some people like 17 years old Marvin Sabaton defined quite a bit part of his life. He mentioned that he would like to study history and he's interested started because of Sabaton. *"Heavy Metal changed my*

*whole life. New friends, new personality, everything got new in my life. And now I have plans for my future to study history and all this because of Sabaton"*

Greg (25, USA) mentioned that the songs actually given him some ideas for the modeling. *"Some of Sabaton's songs have given me ideas for the model kits that I build from time to time. I recently finished one loosely inspired by 'Ghost Division', and I have gotten the idea to do a British Hawker Hurricane fighter bearing the squadron code of the No. 303 mentioned in Aces in Exile. "*

There was a a gun collector among the interviewees and a soldier who identified his current role with the thematics of Sabaton 's songs.

Japp mentioned that Sabaton influence quite a lot of his hobbies.

*"I started playing the guitar ( their songs ) , at the 12 of Decemeber i am going to their concert in Eindhoven (NL) that's gonna be my first concert ever. i have 2 albums, a Carolus Rex hoodie. and can't just forget their awesome new Blue-Ray (swedish empire live)P robably i am going to Sabaton open air 2014. I hope that i will ever find the time to go and visit all the battlefields in their songs.*

Jessie mentioned that Sabaton is a big influence for her literature choices and learning more about European history.

*"Literature – Sabaton got huge influence here, I have not read anything other then books about WWI and WW2 for a few years now. There are not enough hours in each day to get through them all!"*

Sometimes the lyrical content inspired people's travel destinations. Esther and her husband

*"As for travel destinations, that started already with the modeling bit, but is is nice to go to places that are both of interest to my husband and are in Sabaton songs. It is combining so nicely."*

Jessie's (USA) travel destinations are Rockstad: Falun, therefore the rock festival taking place in hometown of Sabaton members and Sabaton Open Air both organized with their involvement were two of Jessie's many trips to Sweden.

*"On my last trip I made visited the Army Museum in Stockholm in order to see the exhibits about*

*"Carolus Rex" and the Carolean Army. I have visited several war cemeteries many years ago and in the future I would like to tour around Europe to see more historical battle grounds and related sites."*

Sabatón organizes own festival in Falun and Sabatón Cruise which is only one music cruise on the Baltic Sea. This form of concerts got popular after "70 000 Tons of Metal" started in the cruising from Miami to the Gulf of Mexico. It attracts many people also opens up possibility for the audience to talk and socialize with band members and other people who they usually know through forums and social medias.

Some people include being a loyal fan to Sabatón and attend related events within their plans for the lifetime.

*"travel destinations" might slightly be influenced, because I'd love to take part in the Sabatón-cruise. But that's actually more or less theoretical and just one of the "must have done before I die"- things. (Urlich, 49, Germany)*

#### **4.2.5 Sabaton's creativity**

Every interviewed person agreed that they can easily connect the presented story to particular fact and often the research it further. The stories are complete and its very pleasant and approachable way of learning history of own country and the others- even if historically that was the side own country was fighting against. Songs portraying the struggle in battle from the perspective of soldiers participating it the battle. Stories sometimes presenting fighting ancestors and learning admiration and respect for those who fought.

*"In my opinion, they open a new door to learn about history other than just studying literature in school. In order to present accurate facts in an emotional but not yet politically intended fashion shows much sensitivity. The fact that they are sometimes thought to be Nazi or anti-Semite is ridiculous. Their sings vary in themes and topics and thus do only capture the emotional impact on the people affected by that historical event. They share stories about the Carolean Empire (Carolus Rex), about World War II and others. I like the way they try to make the worlds open their eyes to all that's going on or has gone on over hundreds of years .(Linda, Germany) "*

Jonathan (21, Belgium) mentioned that he always check what the song is about if he is familiar with the event and focus on how the story is presented in Sabaton's way.

*"I like the way the songs are shaped. As you expect, there are variations in how much detail of a particular event are contained in a given song with some having quite a bit and others having not so much. Compare, for example, "Uprising" with "Back In Control". The former goes into somewhat more detail than the latter with respect to the conflict itself."*

*"I think Sabaton does an exemplary job of combining story with song. Each paints a picture of the events it portrays, and is thematically appropriate to those events, whether it's the triumph of conquering the third reich in Attero Dominatus, or the horrors of trench or jungle warfare in The Price of a Mile and Into the Fire. I've actually tried a few times to write similar content, and haven't had good luck, so I know the band puts an ace effort into what they do. They don't tell the whole story of course, they're musicians, not professors, but many are inspired like me to go read up on the details of things after hearing their music."(Greg, 25, USA)*

*"Songs consist of so much knowledge, dates and facts in history. Whenever I come across a historical fact in their songs, I can relate it to what I have learned in school and get some kind of Enlightenment. They help me to remember important dates in history without politically taking sides."(Linda, Germany)*

*I also became interested in the history behind their lyrics, and came to have a much deeper appreciation and respect for the men and women who fought through both world wars. Knowing what challenges they faced helped me to face mine. (Jessie, USA)*

*"They are showing so much historical background and knowledge... sometimes it is a little bit frightening how much they know and how good they changed it into lyrics AND music."*

(Anna-Maria, Germany)

Different songs attracted people just before they become fans of the band. Several people got to like one song, some of them confessed that they could listen just to that song for several weeks-for example Jonathan (21, Belgium) and the song Primo Victoria he also mentioned that after every new Sabaton album he follow it content by reading few books related to the topic or read about it online. If the subject is already familiar, he strongly concentrates on the way how story is presented.

Sabaton also brings the Swedish culture closer to their fans undoubtedly through last album "Carolus Rex (2012)" telling the story of Swedish Empire. Album was released in two language versions Swedish and English although bilingual interviews stated that the Swedish version is much more emotionally loaded then its translation. Possibly it portrays stories better in the native language. Interest in Sweden among Sabaton's fans was listed not even in relation to their last album- people were keen on visiting Sweden, hometown of the band, attending festivals then as also learning its culture and history.

I did not have any native Swedish speakers among my interviewees therefore I could not investigate further the differences among the same songs in Swedish and English. There were two people one of them was Esther-who is native Dutch but living in Sweden who mentioned that Swedish version is

more intimate than English one.

*"I know for a fact that Joakim (and Pär to a lesser extend) does an awfull lot of research before writing lyrics, reading books, battle reports, soldiers diaries, watching documentaries and even consulting historians. He/they just don't want to be wrong. And I must say that the information presented in the stories valuable and I do not doubt their truthfullness. I especially like the Carolus Rex album (preferably in Swedish) for it presents a complete story."*

Esther wash not the only one who pointed out that the concept album about Swedish Empire was excellent to present the whole story.

Jaap Lobach (Nehterlands) mentioned that he learned a lot from researching the Swedish Empire

*"I research only songs from their latest album ( Carolus Rex ) because i know quite a few things about WWII but not about the swedish empire and I learnt a lot from it."*

Jessie(USA) summed up Sabatons effort in writing songs *"I think it's a fairly well known fact that Joakim and Pär are very meticulous about doing research and getting their facts correct before writing Sabaton songs. The songs present enough information for the listener to get a sense of the situation or perspective from which the song is written."*

Some fans got attracted to the artist though the artwork on the album cover.

*"Know that many men will suffer  
know that many men will die  
Half a million lives at stake  
At the fields of Paschendale  
And as night falls the general calls and the battle carries on  
I long what is the purpose of it all  
What's the price of a mile... "*  
(Sabaton-Paschendale)

### ***4.3 Fans contribution in creating the stories***

People like to be actively involved in cooperation with the band. By staying close to their fans artist receive constant feedback on their actions and keeps the dialogue between brand identity and brand image active. Through open and friendly positions band build up closer relationships with their audience therefore they are familiar what brand image is, how they are seen by their audience and what might be their expectations. Inviting people to be involved with generating ideas for the next albums defines clearly what is Sabaton to their fans and what they are waiting to hear next.

I mentioned above active co-operation on creating music video to the song 40:1 by descendants of people who actually fought and lead to the battle there. Also in the interview people described many ideas that they passed over to the Sabaton or their area of interest they would like to be covered by Sabaton and therefore they will learn more. Greg (25, USA) described sending idea to the band as his way of supporting the artist.

*"Giving artists ideas to work with, that sort of thing. The other end of it, I think, is that the deeds themselves and the people who did them deserve to be remembered, and not just by history nerds."*

Greg finds the subject of researching history fascinating. His suggestions for a new song of Sabaton arose even before he discovered the band. He watched a documentary about Battle of Samar, read the book *"The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors"* by James D. Homfisher and then he wrote a longer description of a battle but ended up placing his shorter description as a suggestion for a band:

*"In short, courage, camaraderie, and tenacity triumphed when an American picket squadron, radio call sign "Taffy 3" found itself disastrously outgunned and within range of the Japanese fleet's remaining big ships. The entire US task unit of three destroyers, four destroyer escorts, and six small escort carriers was outweighed by the Japanese flagship alone, and the first planes into the fight were carrying ordnance for the original mission of air support for the troops ashore and anti-submarine patrols. In spite of the odds, the US naval force, aided by planes from sister task units and its own rearmed birds, were able to put up such a ferocious fight that the Center Force was forced to withdraw. The destroyers and one of the destroyer escorts fired torpedoes and hammered the weaker superstructures of the Japanese capital ships with their guns, while constant air attacks, sometimes decoy runs carried out by planes already out of ammo, kept the Japanese fleet disorganized as they*

*tried to avoid hits. Several of Sabaton's other songs, such as Screaming Eagles and 40:1 have focused on similar struggles against seemingly impossible odds, and I think this battle would be a worthy addition."*

In some cases, people put in impact of personal interest perceptive in presenting the songs, even though the idea was not presented to the band- Manni who is a biologist and dog trainer said that his idea for the song would refer to the subject of animal abuse during wars.

Another also American fan-Wayne gave the band whole USB drive containing songs suggestions. He confessed that he checked the details few times to get the things correctly, spend 2-3 hours putting it together and 4-5 revising it correcting it, all together he has spent on that over 2 or 3 weeks.

*"Yes, In fact I gave Joakim a USB thumb drive with a whole list of suggestions for things they might cover along with very brief descriptions. The one I most wish they will address is what occurred at Wake Island starting on December 7, 1941. This little atoll has been called by some, "the Alamo of the Pacific" and the resistance of those men (along with the incompetence of the Japanese navy) thoroughly disrupted the Japanese time tables and it is possible that the time spent trying to capture this little atoll (which is of no strategic value save for the air strip built upon it) prevented an assault on the west coast of the U.S."(Wayne, USA)*

Anna-Maria Rapp send to Pär Sundstöm few of her poems written in January 2012 titled *Women*. The poem is giving the feminine perspective of seeing and experiencing war.

"All men are gone

Fighting

All men are gone

Dying

Our Fathers and Sons

Our Lovers

Gone to War

Whome

Why

How Long

Soldiers are coming

Hurting us

Raping us

Murderous

...

Call us Heroes

Call us Warriors

Call us Sustainers

...

While men are playing war

women fight for Life

While men are fighting games

women they are living

Hear us Calling

See us Standing

Listen to our Words

We are standing

We are living

We are strong"

She wrote also another poem titled "*Is he still my lover*" in English and fragments in German presenting the portrait of war veteran after returning home, *fragment* below:

"War follows him

Wherever he will go

War is in his heart and in his soul

War destroyed him  
as long as he lives  
is he still the man I'm in love?

His life is a mare  
and so is mine  
we will always pay the prize".

Anna-Maria presented beautiful, very emotional poems written from very feminine point of view. Topic of the war was familiar to Anna-Maria as a result the stories told by her father, who was born in 1923 and described himself as war-prisoner. She was fascinated with these stories although she felt deeply that everything would be so much easier and better without the war. She grew up in an anti-war mood, although it did not affect her relationship towards military.

Also Jessie presented an idea for the song including the role of women in First and Second World War.

*"On a previous incarnation of the Panzer Battalion forum, I had shared my idea for writing a song about the role women took during WWI and WWII, and in particular, the women of the Air Transport Auxiliary (aka Spitfire Women) in Britain. I find that a lot of discussion about wars tend to center on the roles men played and leave out the many important and heroic deeds that women did."*

Fans of Sabaton are actively involved in a creative process and they got high historic knowledge and many of ideas what could be presented on the next albums. They also have high expectation when it comes to outcome of bands artistic creativity. Fans see searching for ideas as their way of supporting the artist but also it maintains the communication between artist and the band. Making the audience actively involved rises the importance of the fans comparing to creative process the other artists. Audience thinks about interesting facts in history they are familiar with or those which are part of their own heritage and concern their ancestors or local areas. Dialogue also a big issue in forming and defining brand. Band members are generating and selecting ideas which can be best material for song writing.

As band members admitted during the interview there is no room for experimenting or changing the area of subject presented as they are putting at risk losing big number of faithful fans.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Historical metal as a brand

This research was designed to portray and analyze how storytelling is used by the band as a tool of building its concept and identity and answer the question how brand identity and brand image evolves as a dialogue between the artist and audience?

Sabaton is a unique case in the music business. Band is a storyteller representing a historical storytelling. Presented stories are poeticized narratives almost written in way of bedtime stories for children with moral values presenting the fight of good and evil. Every song is a story from word's history deeply rooted in facts presenting different historical event. Stories are memorable and powerful, often awaking people interest to find out more about presented story. It is pleasurable, approachable and modern way of historical storytelling.

BRAND IDENTITY- metal band

BRAND IMAGE- historical metal band

BRAND IDENTITY	BRAND IMAGE
Focus on creating good music, fulfilling themselves as good musicians, concept developed spontaneously.	Fans see Sabaton as a clear concept and music, just few people focused on the band members- their appearance, performance, character as part of definitions.
Keeping in mind audience wishes and expectations.	Audience admits content of their song being different-deeper meanings instead entertainment.
Music is ready first. They got some kind of general idea. Lyrics are written in the recording studio while recording the album- band picks topic they like and can become a good song. Band members matches the subject for the songs with mood of the music.	Audience trust lyrics creditability, is familiar with the fact some lyrics are checked up with the history professors.

No religious, political or ideological connections.	Concept confusing at first for some of the fans.
Band members fully engaged with touring, keeping connection with their audience.	Open friendly personalities, heavy touring schedule.
While working with history professor he suggested few ideas and band selected those which could create good songs about. They sended ready lyrics back to history professor to double check if they were correct.	Audience claim that the band do a lot of research before writing lyrics, reading books, battle reports, soldiers diaries, watching documentaries and even consulting historians.
Band claims that they are getting the ideas from their fans, they ask through the forums or during personal interaction what is interesting and fans would be looking to hear about. Pär admits that interest in history came with songwriting, and he does not know much outside the stories they wrote about.	Audience admire the band being passionate about history, for some of the audience band is a source of inspiration or positive energy, motivation.

(Figure 10: Brand image vs brand identity)

Sabaton is a band with obvious identity. Its brand is created by overall content of artistic activity, publicity and the concept. There are clearly known from its concept what was proven in all collected interviews. In this case its brand is a weapon on the big market of artist. Stories and storytelling are the spine for Sabaton's brand-lifting the reputation and creating fans expectations. Everybody knows what Sabaton stands for, fans are realizing created brand and symbols behind it. The meaning is strong and fully expressed in overall artistic expression. Sabaton stands for presenting glory of heroes in world's history without taking sides or following one ideology. Sabaton brand also stand for good music, charismatic singer, good and emotional performance.

Some people were looking for entertainment, good music, community feeling during the life shows, the other group was also looking for some deeper content, new information, power and motivation generated out of the lyrics and music. Audience is wider due to the fact that overall concept not only music attracts people.

Open and friendly position of the band members helps to maintain relationship with their fans and keep

the dialogue between brand identity and brand image constantly active. Band could measure up peoples' expectations, listen to their opinions and exchange information- including people interested in history, war memorabilia's or content seekers. Bringing up unknown stories makes people from presented areas proud and educates others about heroic events and people, nations stories.

Brand is visible in Sabaton's creativit, album covers, and merchandise as all is featuring topics related to historic events.

There is no known documentation about the cases from mainstream popular music or any other genre following such one consistent concept such a history for its overall artistic creativity. There can be found a similarity to the concept albums, which are unified by theme which was expressed in instrumental, composition, narrative or lyrical way. The difference is that the concept album as marked by its name was narrowed to one album presenting such a consistency. It makes the band distinctive from the other bands in the market, therefore Sabaton's brand is even stronger. Researchers claim that nowadays uniqueness is very rare value which is strongly demanded by the consumers. I t was proven in the fans interviews that it highly appreciated value that Sabaton is not another band singing about the usual "rock entertaining subjects".

In this form, the Sabaton's album changed from a collation of heterogeneous songs into a narrative work with a single theme which individual songs segue into one other. Scholars like Porter 1985 quoted in Schultz et all. would call it competitive advantage.

Sometimes albums are presenting a story relating to certain topic or ideology. Artists are sharing their own interest in literature, fine arts or mythology and history or particular culture by creating their image around particular themes. Concept albums first emerged in 1960s as a rock music aspired to the status of art, and some were accordingly themed rock operas.

A lot of bands starting from creating the band's name determining their way to keep certain thematic unity in terms of all elements or creativity- lyrics, image, album covers, stage dressing, promotional elements. For Sabaton it came as a result of evaluation in their creative processes not intentionally but naturally and spontaneously.

Storytelling about the historical topics become a sign of Sabaton's recognition and the band become a branded as historical heavy metal. Is Sabaton a pioneer of a new genre which could be named a concept band?

Concept band was not created intentionally although nowadays the artist felt the need of continuation with being a concept band in order to fulfill their fans expectations. Fans got actively involved in generating ideas for the songs and albums, there got a strong idea what kind of message they are expecting from Sabaton- message much more meaningful than just entreating. People respect the content presented even refer to some songs as requiring moment of silence and avoiding typical concert behavior. Fans were also developing quite close relationship with band member, fan clubs member regularly meets up with band members, partying, observing sound checkups, talking. Its quite unique as many fans considered members personality as a part of band description although together with frequent touring is a part of "band personality" and Sabaton's brand. There is a significant recognition of its identity or a brand. Similarly as presended by Hatch and Schultz (2001) Sabaton is a good and recognizable name under which all song are reliable under a good reputation as a cooperate brands and variety of products. For some group of people it is iconic brand.

Another element of building strong brand was highlight in many interviews friendly and open position of band members as well as charisma and voice of Joåkim Brodén-for decades strong, good looking, wealthy, charming or aspirational figures was associated with brand identity making.

## ***5.2 History as a concept of artistic creativity***

Sabatón maybe even without realizing it is sharing a believe in one of the most known scholars and theorist of Historiography- Hayden White stated that we inherited value to spread historical consciousness. Sabatón presents stories featuring a plot, characters in battle, most often heroes and some kind of moral truths. Songs are written in a way that narrator portrays historical event or from the character's perspective. All of those songs are highly loaded with emotions. It is done in a new and most likely unfamiliar way to the scholars nevertheless historical text are spread by Sabatón song's to the large and growing audience. It would be most likely called by the scholars "a raw material to proper historiography" (White 2010: x) excepting that it is based on "proper historiography" and can evoke people interest in reaching to the source of that information.

## ***5.3 Meanings, emotions, symbols***

Content of the songs was touching and important for all of the interviewed persons. In quite many cases people were looking for relation into their ancestors' stories or experience.

Stories presented in the song are building understanding of the war conflict seeing from different perspective, therefore there are also connecting people and blurring conflicts of the past.

For some of the interviewee's battle struggle related songs give the inspiration and motivation in own life.

People know local stories unknown to word, about heroic acts in the area or they particular admire heroism form world's history which is forgotten or unrated, they become excited and forward the ideas to Sabatón who make it into narrative, historical storytelling and share it, color it, make it more expressive and made it a song.

This concept and making the band's creativity somehow predictable- its going to present heroic act's

from word's history allows fans to be involve in searching for the idea and excites them what it is what is going to be presented-one war, particular period of time, or area. People are waiting impatiently for some clues what going to be told on the next album and there are ready to learn and research the topic more. It is not possible with any other band which just write songs without any concept into overall creativity.

## ***5.4 Bands identity shaped by fans***

In case of Sabaton theirs is a clear difference between brand image and brand identity whereas brand identity is the more dominating one. Storytelling- content of the songs creates the identity of the band.

The concept of historical stories was approved and received with excitement by the audience of Sabaton, therefore it come in a very natural way based on the dialogue and the bridge between an artist and the fan-not designed by a management or a record company. Media presence seems not to be important factor for the brand identity.

The band often highlights that fans been the inspiration for new released album. Those action increase audience passions about history and seeking for the content which could become next Sabaton's song.

What band members do not realize many of their fans refers to the band as something more interesting because of the historical topics then casual metal band - singing about war it was a unique element capturing people's attention. People are glad that somebody presents the topics which matter, which changed the world, as also appreciate "musical monument to the war heroes. The content often motivates people to research and trying to find out more about presented historical event reaching to the books or documentaries.

There is link between research done on the stories that those familiar ones are most powerful. (Albrighton 2013) In case of historical events there will be always someone who will recognize the one pictured in Sabaton's songs or through knowing the song will find out more about the details of presented event.

Musicians of Sabaton concentrate on their music stating it clearly they are a metal band and claiming music to be the factor attracting people, they want to create power and energy. Despite that fans describe them as being that band and many was drawn to them through the historical topic as well as music. For some of them it has been a perfect combination of two of their interests- music and history. People who were drawn to the band through the music mentioned that they learn very quickly that the band tells authentic historical tales and fell in love with that concept.

Historical topics become not only Sabaton's brand as also unique selling point from the perspective of music business. It also appears to be good business strategy as something fresh and new what people have not been used to. People also got inspired by those topics to reach for historical books, visit battle ground or find inspiration for other kinds of hobbies or even life situations.

Sabaton's fans learn a lot new fact about worlds history as also with excitement share other ones which they find most impressive or there are close to their family history or own perspective.

People value the way in which historical topics are presented, respecting the neutral point of view and everything being correct with historical facts.

War topics are perfect material for a story-with music lyrics can especially capture attention and "stuck in somebody's head.

Through being open and friendly to their fans, band lead constant dialogue between brand image and brand identity. Band is listening to their fans taking into account their suggestions what they would like to hear in Sabaton's interpretation, what is interesting and unique and therefore they are measuring fans expectations. Nowadays Sabaton is creating music for their fans as the expectations, the concept and the brand image are narrowing band's artistic freedom.

Many researchers including those focusing on storytelling being a good tool in business listed few elements of the good story with conflict being a curtail one.

Each of Sabaton song presents a fight for freedom of some nation, conflict between two different nations. Stories got a plot and feature though opposing characters representing the good and the evil-hero vs villain. Stories are presented from the fighting side of view, never favoring or glorifying one of the nations.

There are many nations stories told on Sabaton's albums. Each is short depiction of historical event, struggle in battle. Music illustrating the events and charismatic persona of the lead singer makes it even more live. Fans describe Joakim as a great singer and great entertainer, people know the lyrics and like to sing along.

People are immersed in music-research showed that learning is much more effective when we are fully absorbed by the experience, particularly when that experience is possessive. when we are enjoying ourselves by a product of it. (Brophy 2009: 60) That what is called immersion.

Artist and musicians tend to become so immersed in they creative work that the become lost in it. Focused on what they are doing but cut off from the outside world. A group of people can be equally immersed.

This could be an effect of a group of people which are immersed in Sabatons music. Therefore, through positive experience of listening to the music people are learning about the history, through multiple listening memorizing the lyrics and therefore historical facts.

This group of people experience learning, developing own culture refereed by Boje. (2012:68)

Sabatons become a recognizable brand presenting a clear image through storytelling used as a part of their musical creation.

Band consist unique idea which was stylistic consistency and presenting the meaningful stories in combination with good story instead of easy listening entertainment.

Sabatons facilitates and open the gates for the the people to do further research, develop interest in history or if the interest lead someone to the band then extend knowledge to maybe unknown events.

## ***5.6 Further Research***

I studied Sabaton and collected evidence of their storytelling informing about worlds history only based on their fan's opinion and people interested in heavy metal genre. One of the limitation of the study was no possibility to talk to more than one band member. Every member creating Sabaton could have different opinion about themselves as a band their image and storytelling. Comparing the interviews of each member could give bigger richer picture of what they think about themselves and possibly more insight into the creative process. One possibility for further research would be introduce their piece of music/lyrics to unfamiliar group of people, familiarize them with their storytelling for some time and then to interview them asking their opinion about the content of historical storytelling. In the future also more of the interviewee profiling could be done in terms of their education/employment.

Ethnography on the band's creative project or fans interactions during the fanclub meetings could give insight into nonverbal actions and portrayed better interactions within a fan club, a lot of fans were talking about their relationship with the band or cooperation in variety of areas.

Another possibility for further research is explore whether there are any other existing cases in the same or different musical genres focusing exclusively around one topic or concept and drawing storytelling into their musical creations and through that building their brand identity.

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***Appendices:***

***Sample interviews questions:***

***Fan interviews:***

-If you could tell me the story - How did you come across the band?

-What made you most interested in the band?

-How would you define Sabaton?

-Are you generally interested in history?

- Do you ever research, discover deeper the stories presented by Sabaton?

-Are the stories of Sabaton memorable, can you recall them and connect to particular historical fact?

-Which made strongest impact on you?

-Does Sabaton influence your interests in other parts of your life such as hobbies, the work you do, the clothes you wear, literature choice, travel destinations ex.(battlefields) etc.?

-How would you rate storytelling by Sabaton, are they presenting much historical information, do you think they make much effort during the creative process?

-Some people are sharing historical fact with Sabaton which haven't been yet the subject of the songs.

-

Did you ever have an idea to present song idea to the band or being in any other way actively involved?